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PUBLIC/PRIVATE VENTURES
PHILADELPHIA, PA**

Representing: Public/Private Ventures

P/PV supports Fiscal Year 2005 funding for the Prisoner Reentry Initiative and the Mentoring Children of Prisoners program.

Thank you, Chairman Regula, for providing Public/Private Ventures with the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee today.

I am Renata Cobbs Fletcher, a Senior Program Officer for Public Policy and Community Partnership at P/PV, a national nonprofit organization that seeks to improve the effectiveness of social policies and programs. P/PV designs, tests, and studies initiatives that increase support, skills, and opportunities for residents of low-income communities. We work with policymakers to see that the lessons and evidence produced are reflected in policy and provide training, technical assistance, and learning opportunities to practitioners based on documented effective practices.

P/PV's unique initiatives and partnerships include the Youth Education for Tomorrow (YET) Centers - a collaboration of public, private, and faith-based organizations designed to provide students with the educational foundation of literacy necessary to succeed. P/PV has also worked with the Nurse Family Partnership in Pennsylvania to improve maternal, paternal, and early childhood health and well-being. The Nurse Family Partnership is a non-profit organization that provides low income, first time mothers with the proven service of home visiting by public health nurses.

Every year, approximately 760,000 prison inmates and juvenile detainees are released from secure detention facilities and returned to their communities and families. Disconnected from the labor market and from social networks and at high risk of re-engaging in criminal behaviors, the return of these ex-prisoners threatens the already tenuous cohesion of many of the most troubled communities in the country. A 1994 Department of Justice study following almost 300,000 former State prisoners found that approximately two-thirds were re-arrested and more than half had been re-incarcerated within three years of their release.

Last year Public/Private Ventures launched a national faith-based reentry initiative in partnership with the Department of Labor - *Ready4Work: An Ex-Prisoners and Faith Initiative*. This initiative operates in faith-based sites located in areas of high crime to strengthen local support networks for juveniles and young adults as they reenter their communities following detention and/or incarceration.

With few skills, poor education, and fragile support networks, hundreds of thousands of returning ex-prisoners require assistance in making effective transitions to life outside prison. Many criminal justice experts agree that employment is the key to successfully reintegrating prisoners into society, and parolees who maintain strong family and community ties have greater success in reintegrating into the community and avoiding incarceration. The demonstration focuses on reconnecting ex-offenders to their social system - the community and their family; improving education and employment opportunities; and supporting them through a mentor recruited from local faith-based organizations.

Without community-based partners, the resources and infrastructures of the juvenile and criminal justice systems alone are insufficient for interrupting cycles of habitual incarceration and redirecting the lives of returnees. Faith-based institutions are among the strongest, most trusted institutions in urban, often socially disorganized neighborhoods to which many ex-offenders return. As such, these institutions have a proven ability to work collaboratively with other service providers and justice agencies and are a natural avenue for service delivery.

Through its faith-based community collaboration partners, the *Ready4Work* helps to establish and strengthen the returnees' social ties and ensure that returnees make effective and lasting connections to education and employment. The initiative provides a broad array of services, including mentoring, parenting training, case management, job training and placement as well as referrals for additional services. P/PV provides technical assistance and support to all collaboration members to maximize their success in serving this unique population.

In recognition of the difficulties former offenders face and to help returning prisoners rebuild their lives, find work, and avoid crime, President Bush has proposed a four-year \$300 million Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative to be carried out through the collaborative efforts of the Departments of Labor, Housing & Urban Development, and Justice. Harnessing the resources and experience of community and faith-based organizations, the Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative will help ex-offenders find and keep jobs, secure transitional housing and receive mentoring. Based on our positive experience with the Ready4Work Program, P/PV fully supports the Administration's Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative.

In closing, please allow me to share with you another unique program that has leveraged the faith-based community to benefit those impacted by the justice system. The *Amachi* program brings mentors recruited from local congregations together with children of an incarcerated parent. The *Amachi* program has served as a model for the "Mentoring Children of Prisoners" program. P/PV is grateful for the Subcommittee's leadership last year in securing \$50 million for the MCOP Program. This program affords urban areas with high concentrations of children of incarcerated parents the opportunity to work with their community and faith-based organizations to match congregants with children in need. P/PV fully supports the President's budget request of \$50 million for the "Mentoring Children of Prisoners" program in Fiscal Year 2005.

P/PV's programs such as *Ready4Work* and *Amachi* assist those touched by the justice system in making successful transitions to productive lives, forming lasting ties with family and community, and breaking the cycle of violence so common to many of their communities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for taking into consideration P/PV's efforts. We look forward to working with your Subcommittee this year.

Renata Cobbs Fletcher Biographical Sketch

Renata Cobbs Fletcher, Senior Program Officer for Public Policy and Community Partnership at Public/ Private Ventures, is responsible for the implementation of the first phase of sites for *Juvenile Ready4Work*: An Ex-Prisoners, Community and Faith Initiative, a multi-site national demonstration in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor's Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (DOLCFBCI), the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), and The Annie E. Casey Foundation. The *Juvenile Ready4Work* initiative seeks to provide young people ages fourteen through eighteen who are returning from periods of detention or incarceration with comprehensive support services, including case management, mentoring, educational programming, job training and job placement services.

Prior to P/PV, Renata served as executive director for Leadership, Education and Athletics in Partnership (LEAP), a Connecticut-based academic and social development youth development program for children and young people ages seven through twenty-five. As executive director, she was responsible for the redesign and orchestration of a comprehensive youth development program model created to meet academic and social growth outcomes for children and youth residing in Connecticut's high-poverty neighborhoods. She also designed and executed strategic, collaborative partnership initiatives with stakeholders, community-based organizations, local schools, universities and government agencies. Renata was also responsible for the redesign of program evaluation tools, intended outcomes and related tactics for change.

Prior to assuming the executive director appointment, Renata worked as LEAP's director of development. As such, her work included the design and management of comprehensive development activities related to the expansion and maintenance of public and private support. This was accomplished through the conception and direction of the organization's immediate and long-range fundraising strategies, including major gift, membership, special events, private foundation and corporation campaigns. She was also responsible for the creation and implementation of all external public relations and marketing materials and campaigns.

Renata received her Bachelor of Arts from Spelman College. She has worked extensively with mentoring programs for high-risk youth and young adults, both as a volunteer mentor and program administrator for several organizations, including Volunteer Services for Children in New York City and Bright Beginnings, a program of the Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital.

**Public/Private Ventures
Federal Government Grants
October 1, 2001 to Present**

Name of Agency	Project Name	Award Date	Amount	Grant Term
Corp. for National and Community Service	Amachi Mentoring Program	7/18/2003	\$50,000	One year
	Amachi Mentoring Program	2/18/2004	10,000	One year
U.S. Department of Education	Youth Education for Tomorrow Centers	9/30/2003	49,675	One year
	Youth Education for Tomorrow Centers	9/30/2003	80,000	One year
U.S. Department of Justice	National Faith-Based Initiative for High-Risk Youth	7/8/2002	1,375,000	One year
	National Faith-Based Initiative High-Risk Youth	9/30/2003	1,680,000	One year
	Juvenile Ready4Work	9/30/2003	1,300,000	One year
U.S. Department of Labor	DOL Job Corps Partnership	2/12/2002	100,000	One year
	Chinatown Manpower Project Evaluation	2/24/2003	26,227	Three months
	Faith Based Initiative - Job Corps Centers	4/25/2003	150,000	One year
	Faith Based Initiative - Technical Assistance Contracts	5/15/2003	125,000	16 months
	Poor Performers Project for WIA Formula Youth Grants	6/17/2003	260,000	One year
	Ready4Work: An Ex-Prisoners' and Faith Initiative	6/20/2003	2,500,000	One year
	Enhancing Performance Outcomes for the Workforce Investment Act	10/28/2003	239,728	16 months
	FBO/CBO Grantee Technical Assistance	1/21/2004	250,000	One year